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NEW VACCINE AGAINST BRUCELLOSIS IN HUNGARY

Dr Dezso Buzna

Brucellosis or contagious abortion, also known as Bang's disease, is widespread among Hungary's cattle population, and the damage which it causes is estimated at 100 million forints annually. The sera which have been used in the past proved ineffective and, for this reason, only hygienic measures were taken against the disease. These measures are very expensive and have, therefore, been largely disregarded.

Hungarian researchers recently developed a new vaccine which produces immunity to brucellosis in cows and calves. The vaccine contains live but non-virulent germs of the disease and produces antibodies which can be identified in the blood of the animals 3-6 months after vaccination. It is injected subcutaneously.

The vaccine can be used on infected animals, as well as prophylactically on 4-month old calves. Heifers may also be vaccinated but must not be mated for 3 months after the vaccination. Bulls and pregnant cows must not be vaccinated.

The vaccine is harmless both to the animals and the attendants, because the bacteria introduced by it are destroyed in the animal organism. The vaccine must be fresh when it is used since its effect weakens after a certain period of time.

Vaccination is not followed by a reaction, except a small blister and loss of appetite for a short period of time. Vaccinated cows acquire immunity to brucellosis for at least three periods of freshening. The progeny of vaccinated cows will be healthy.

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The antibodies disappear in the organism within 5-6 months of the vaccination. If they remain in the blood of the vaccinated animals for over 6 months, a later infection is indicated. However, pregnant animals which had been previously vaccinated will resist infection and will not abort.

The new vaccine does not stop an epidemic. Hygienic measures are still important in combating the disease. In case of abortion, the foetus must be buried or burned and the stables, both of infected and healthy animals, must be disinfected. All heifers on the state farms and in the agricultural cooperatives are being vaccinated.

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